



the  
**BI-MONTHLY**

No. 1 Jan '84

the newsletter for bisexuals

Origins of the  
London Bisexual Group

Bisexuality Relationships

The Pink Economy

Plus book review, poetry,  
Writers' Conference, logo competition

Welcome to this, the first issue of The Bi-Monthly, the only newsletter for bisexual women and men in this country.

Although the main impetus for the production of The Bi-Monthly came from the London Bisexual Group its aim is to link bisexuals nationally. We know there are many bisexuals who feel totally alone and isolated from others of similar sexual persuasions and hope that the newsletter can make you feel a part of our community.

The editorial collective want to receive contributions from all parts of the country and on any topic connected with bisexuality. Poems, short stories, Book reviews, articles - anything you want to say will be enthusiastically received and considered for publication. We would be especially glad to hear of any bisexual groups being established in other areas.

Please try to type any contributions - it would make our lives much easier. The next issue of The Bi-Monthly will appear at the end of March, so could we have your contributions no later than March 10th. Send them to BM/BI, London WC1N 3XX

Look forward to hearing from you!

Jules & Phil

thanks to contributors in this issue:  
David Burke, Liz Verran, John,  
Maggie French, John Barker,  
Jules Hobday, Philip Kane

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## WHERE FROM, WHERE TO?

David Burkle

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In February 1980 at the Antisexist Men's Conference in Bristol there was a workshop on bisexuality. From the success of this came the motivation and initiative which led to a further workshop and all day meetings in London later that year - happy hours spent lying in the sun on Hampstead Heath; listening and talking, discovering we were not alone with our feelings and beginning to understand who we are. We wanted to share this new strength in acknowledging our own identity with others, and extend the support we had gained from each other. We formed a collective to produce a 'topic' issue of the Antisexist Men's Newsletter at the beginning of 1981. The topic was bisexuality. After this, wanting to continue meeting together in more than a social sense, we explored two ideas: either setting up a self-help therapy group for bisexual men or starting a regular open meeting for bisexual people. In fact we did both.

The gay men's club Heaven had already started a 'mixed' night on Tuesdays, opening their doors to everyone. Here for the first time we discovered a public place where heterosexual and homosexual people were socialising together in an uninhibited and joyful way. What better place for bisexual people to be at ease. About this time the managing director of Heaven, David Inches, in an interview in Gay News, had offered the facilities of the club to gay groups as a place to work in as well as to socialise in. This was just what we needed - lots of space for different events and workshops, a central London location and all the facilities of a top club open til 3am. Plenty of time to

socialise after the more structured part of the evening, both of which we felt were important for the group to be a success, and on Tuesdays a perfect atmosphere for bisexuals.

Our request to use the club was enthusiastically recieved and we were given very positive support in setting up the group. This enthusiasm was a critical factor in turning the idea into a reality. The group is grateful for this and for the continued use of facilities, and all the help we have received from members of the management and staff at Heaven.

So after several months advance notice, the first meeting took place on 1st September 1981. 62 men and 14 women attended - we had arrived.

We plan to report in subsequent issues on some of the things we have been doing since then. But what of the future?

There has been much support for the idea of a newsletter and quite a few contributions promised, but not many have materialised. So if you want it to succeed, get writing. We hope it will flourish and go some way towards meeting the needs of isolated bisexual people and making other people aware that bisexuality is not just a fashionable pose for trendy pop stars but a way of being for large numbers of ordinary women and men.

We hope that 1984 will see a marked increase in the number of women who come to the group. The proportion of women at our meetings compares favourably with other gay groups, and those who do come often contribute more energy to making the group work than some



of the men.

Heaven has had a bad press as far as women are concerned but on Tuesday nights it is a safe and OK place for women to be. This year we have designated the third Tuesday in each month womens' night. Hopefully women who have hesitated about coming to the group will come on that night and find more women there. Once they feel safe in the group the numbers will increase on other Tuesdays as well.

We want to see the existence of bisexuality more widely acknowledged in the press, on radio and television and particularly in sex education. The heterosexual/homosexual dichotomy fosters attitudes which gives thousands of individuals unreal expectations of what life has to offer.

LBG meets every Tuesday, at Heaven, Under the Arches, off Villiers Street, Charing Cross, at 8-30.

## BEST OF BOTH WORLDS

John

Over the past twenty years there has been a revolution in the ways people behave socially and sexually. Marriage is still the most common social convention whereby two people can structure their personal relationship. However, the number of new marriages, the divorce rates in existing marriages, and other factors, suggest it is a far from ideal social arrangement. Monogamous marriage is based on a voluntary denial of individual freedom to form relationships outside that marriage that have any sexual element or even any element of love. Children, by being objects of affection and love within the family, merely reinforce that insularity further. The nuclear family of man, woman and two children has emerged and found that it does not work in the nuclear age. It has found that it is a lonely family with a very limited number of relatives and friendships, but is introverted, claustrophobic, turned in upon the home. Thus do communities perish.

Yet at the same time there have been exceptions. Some ethnic minorities have not yet gone nuclear. The cause of gay liberation has shown that ways have to be found to establish relationships on a very different pattern. Some heterosexual couples have reached the sorts of mutual understanding

that allows each other freedom, that fill voyeuristic novelists' pages and the columns of certain journals. But nowhere are these problems of relating more acute than in the case of bisexual people.

The very name is revealing. We have gone past the label 'homosexual' with its emphasis on the sexuality of a person's lovers. The word 'gay' rightly emphasises something much more profound - the totality of the relationship. Yet on the other hand a distinct vocabulary exists for labelling different 'types' of gays, and there are numbers of people who would accept that they were one type or another. But with bisexuals the case is different. We are still stuck with the name. We don't have a distinct identity. Unlike gays we have not been part of a great historic movement in recent decades. We cannot be classified easily and perhaps we would not want to be. But we would not want to say that we are "really gay but going through a phase" or "really straight but going through a phase". Those labels do not apply. We want to acknowledge that we are both 'straight and gay. We want the best of both those worlds. Nor



would we insist that "bi is best"; it just happens to be the way we are.

But the problem is learning how to avoid all those labels. We want to learn how to live interesting integrated lives, with whatever arrangements with our lovers of any sex that seems the best to us. The group that has just been formed in London is beginning to explore these issues. It is, we think, the first bisexual group of any size to have been started in this country. We come from a variety of backgrounds. Some have been, and still are, married. Others not. Some have been through gay and lesbian groups, others not. We are from all backgrounds, all classes and ages. We include people who have very differing degrees of attraction to the two sexes and some of us are equally attracted to both. Some of us have several lovers and others few or none. The group is just beginning. We have a loose

democratic structure and decision-making is fully participative but without membership rules or regulations. We have a number of projects in mind including writing, making video film, discussions and a range of social events - films, disco, theatre, food etc. If you want to explore these with us then come to a meeting, write to BM/BI, London WC1N 3XX or phone London Gay Switchboard and ask for the current telephone contact for the group.

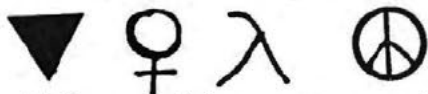
Meetings are held every Tuesday at Heaven, Under the Arches, off Villiers Street, Charing Cross, at 8.30pm. Entry is free, and you can stay on for the disco too.

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(This article was written in the early days of the London Bisexual Group but has not been published previously - belated thanks to John).

## LOGO COMPETITION

There has been much discussion at the London Bisexual Group recently about the lack of a bisexual image. In this issue of The Bi-Monthly, a contributor talks of the many overt faces of the lesbian and gay world. Most people can spot the clone image in the street, but how can one perpetrate a bisexual image?

London Bisexual Group decided that mighty oaks from little acorns grow so how about finding a symbol that we could adopt, which could become as instantly recognisable as



and so on. This could appear as the logo of this Newsletter, on badges, T-shirts, banners and so on.

The big question was, how could

we find something suitable and acceptable to the majority? We decided that this should be thrown open to as many people as possible. So we're asking this of you all - put your creative talents to work and submit your ideas for the "Bisexual Pride" symbol. It doesn't matter if your draughts-personship is not of professional standards - just send us a drawing of your idea.

We will publish all the entries in the next issue of The Bi-Monthly and call in the votes.

As an inducement we'll think of something tempting to award the winner.....

Submit your entries to:  
BM/BI, London WC1N 3XX  
by the beginning of March.

# NOTES ON THE PINK ECONOMY

Philip Kane

The following notes were originally intended to form the core of an article devoted to an understanding of economic developments relating to the 'gay community' in recent years. The attempt to produce a thorough analysis has so far foundered upon the paucity of information, particularly empirical data, surrounding the developments that I have outlined. However, I feel that it is important to publish these notes as they stand for two reasons.

- a) To stimulate further research on such developments, working towards the detailed analysis that has so far been lacking.
- b) To generate discussion of the issues raised and on how gay and bisexual groups need to tailor their theory and practice in order to progress towards their goals in the light of evidence on the growth of a 'pink economy'.

In furtherance of these aims I would hope that readers will be inspired to dig out the relevant missing information and send their findings to this magazine, either as they stand or as articles for publication.

Whether contributions agree with these notes, modify them or disagree with them is not of primary importance. It is clarity on the issue that is vital and hence a healthy debate is the immediate necessity.

- 1) The campaign for the legalisation of male homosexuality first made real progress during the long economic boom of the 50's and 60's. While the system was riding high on the wave of post-war expansion, bourgeois society could countenance freedoms that would have been unthinkable only a few years earlier. The prevalent mood of liberalism served as a social safety valve and allowed for the integration of ideas and movements that might otherwise have caused severe damage to the fabric of the existing order.
- 2) The legalisation campaign, conducted by small groups with little active support, easily fell victim to this process of absorption. The reform movement thus culminated during 1967 with major changes in the English law relating to homosexuality, the Tories later extending this to Scotland and Northern Ireland.
- 3) Prior to these legal changes gay men had frequented semi-clandestine bars and clubs that were subject to constant police harassment. Following the 1967 Act such attacks were more usually due to the hostility of individual officers than to an anti-gay policy and became increasingly rare.
- 4) Gay men in the United States, however, had no Act of Parliament to relieve them of the burden of a homophobic police force. In 1969 their resentment erupted in the Stonewall riots in San Francisco. The most important effect of the riots was to heighten awareness among gays internationally of the need for solidarity in the face of continuing repression.
- 5) Unfortunately the sense of togetherness that developed generally entailed forgetting the realities of class in the new gay politics. This sometimes created problems within the youthful gay groups but in the interests of 'gay unity' these were normally dealt with by a political shift to accommodate those who viewed the development of an independent gay identity as more important than working to overthrow an oppressive society.



- c) In spite of the occasional schisms the mood of strength imparted by the rise of the gay movement made the 70's a heady period. Open homosexuality and political action became the norm rather than the exception among those who came to regard themselves as the gay community. Along with the growth of the political movement there came a proliferation of new gay bars and clubs, providing gay women and men with a complete social scene separated from the straight world.
- 7) The scene created the space in which gays could explore their own identities to an unprecedented extent. This process was most marked in San Francisco, New York and Amsterdam, where entire ghetto areas emerged inhabited almost exclusively by gay men. To a lesser extent the move towards a 'gays only' lifestyle was perceptible in all the advanced capitalist countries.
- 8) Yet the brave new world of legal homosexuality and the commercial scene was not inhabited only by gays. The 1967 Act had come as the post-war boom had collapsed into recession, crisis and renewed social unrest. As the gay movement was gathering momentum, capitalists were becoming increasingly desperate for new outlets. Legalisation opened up previously unexploited markets and they were quick to seize upon the proffered opportunity.
- 9) The provision of homosexual pleasure was rapidly integrated into the mainstream of capitalist commodity production. For example 'Heaven', the gay nightclub complex in London's Charing Cross, was bought by Virgin Records for £500,000. More usual, though, than such a blatant seizure of assets was a gradual infiltration of the gay scene by capital.
- 10) The lesbian-oriented sector of the scene has largely escaped absorption by existing capitalist economic structures. This has been due in the main to the simple fact that women generally have less money to spend on commodities than men, particularly a gay male couple whose relationship doubles their financial resources.
- 11) Yet even in this sector there are no islands of liberation. The collectives that survive and the new gay companies, however radical they may wish to be, are forced by the exigencies of operating within a capitalist economy to employ the same methods as any capitalist concern.
- 12) The denizens of this pink economy, however, have managed to retain a gloss of radicalism. The blind solidarity fostered by the gay movement has led to an unjustified faith in their motives and their politics. Meanwhile the openly reactionary infiltrators have cashed in on this sense of trust, often appointing gay men to managerial posts overseeing their substantial interests on the gay market.
- 13) In the late 70's/early 80's those interests expanded swiftly and even appeared to flourish as the effects of the world crisis cut deeper into profit margins elsewhere. An already large turnover was boosted still further as the political gay movement went into a sharp decline and gay men turned increasingly to the scene for mutual protection from a seemingly hostile climate.
- 14) The continuing recession has brought this expansion of the pink economy to an end. Now the new pink capitalists, like their straight counterparts, are subject to increasing pressure as profits fall. The solutions that they have turned to are familiar to straight 'communities' worldwide.
- 15) For example the restructuring of 'Gay News' that followed the departure of Denis Lemon involved three redundancies. It is highly unlikely that the victims felt any sense of community with their employers as they contemplated their futures. Neither was this an isolated case. The same pattern is being repeated throughout the pink economy as the crisis bites deeper.

- 16) Yet again and again the myth of common interest is dusted off in order to justify actions that work directly against the interests of the majority of gay people. In 1982 a strike at Watney's breweries was broken "because gay people needed the beer in their pubs"; the London Transport strike was broken "because gays needed to get on the Gay Pride demonstration"; and ~~and~~ members at 'Gay News' broke a union instruction to support striking hospital workers "because gay people have to get their paper". Unfortunately the reactions of gay workers at Watney's, on London Transport and in the hospitals to these displays of 'gay solidarity' are not readily available.
- 17) Clearly the rise of the pink economy is due to its thorough integration into the structure of capitalist society. Far from being in existence to serve the interests of a convenience-related gay community it has come to propagate the contradictions and exploitative relationships that lie at the heart of gay oppression. The pink economy belongs in the same historical dustbin as the rest of capitalism.

## My Gynae's Thoughts

You sit with your back to the door.  
I enter cautiously and wait to be greeted.  
You ignore me and the nurse tells me to sit.

Keeping me out of your sight, you ask salacious questions:  
How your mind enjoys its fetishistic delights  
Without the danger of facing a whole woman!

Now the best bit comes - you tell me to lie on the couch,  
Facing away from you of course in case you see my face:  
I mustn't seem human or your defences would fall.

How I disgust you - a menstruating woman -  
Full of powers you seek to mutilate.  
You examine me internally from behind -  
By only seeing the one part I become manageable  
Like pornographic images - sectioned, doctored,  
Unable to speak or hear or think - a rubber doll.

You decide I need surgery -  
The temptation to penetrate me with your knife is too great.  
You can purify me by burning away the surface of the cervix,  
Just as witches were burned to cleanse the West of strong women.

Liz Verran



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# LOVING BOTH EQUALLY

John Barker

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As children, many of us looked to both parents for security, love and physical contact. We were taught to love both equally. Though we may not live up to this ideal, due to choice or circumstance, it nevertheless underpins the ways in which we are brought up during a critical time in our lives. The structures are then laid down for the experience and expression of emotions and ways in which we will go on to relate to others.

It is surprising in view of this that there is little to no recognition given to bisexuality in adulthood. A simple definition of this might be an openness to quality relationships with either sex. Quality might come in one or more ways; through emotional, sensual or sexual involvement. If this blurs old ideas of sexuality maybe this is long overdue.

It could be argued that it is most difficult for men to maintain such an openness. As they move out of childhood, they are pressured into competing with and distancing themselves from each other. They are brutalized by the expectation to be continuously tough, aggressive and always ready for action. They are just beginning to realise how weak they are in passively accepting this way of living - and dying. They are educated for competition, disregard for others and a readiness to kill each other, helped by a taboo on affection between themselves. If they attempt to experience the full range of emotions which are about being human, our concept of men would radically alter.

The simple test of how strong and courageous men really are, is to ask them to express their vulnerabilities and need for affection. There are few with the strength to face potential hostilities by admitting to needing close relationships with other men, whether simply emotional or sensual.

It is much easier for women to express affection for each other and for men. However, they too risk ridicule, hostility and losing their children if love for another woman is strong and sincere, no matter how good their parenting. We seem to have created a society which lives in fear of people loving each other. Conversely we allow endless money to be pumped into preparations for wars, as though they are in some way 'natural' and necessary.

Had it not been for the womens' movement and to a lesser extent the gay movement, this letter may not have been written. Groups of women and men - some mixed - are attempting to confront sexism in our lives. One recent offshoot of this is the effort by those who see themselves as bisexual to establish support groups. It is hoped that these will also provide space for others who do not view themselves as such to discuss experiences and needs, without the usual pressures to be a compulsory heterosexual or compulsory anything else.

# LESBIAN AND GAY WRITERS'

## CONFERENCE 1983

Philip Kane

Following the success of the 1982 Lesbian and Gay Writers Conference in Manchester, a second event was held at The Factory in Hackney over the weekend of 3rd/4th November last year. The conference, sponsored by Gay Mens Press and Brilliance Books, was attended by nearly thirty writers, both published and unpublished.

The true success of such a conference has to be measured by its lasting results and on this criterion it appears that a great deal of energy was wasted over the weekend. All that has come from two days of discussion is a limited exchange of names and addresses, a small group of writers planning to meet on an informal basis and vague promises of a further Writers Conference in October 1984.

The tragedy is that any failure was unnecessary. No conclusions were reached, no transcripts were made of the discussions, no real writers groups have been formed. Yet the potential existed (and still exists) for the Conference to become a cauldron of new ideas. Various projects were suggested, for example a register of gay writers, but the prevailing lack of direction ensured that these were not taken up other than by a minority of the writers present.

Writers Conferences can be successful. The recent Feminist Writers Conference attracted 150 women and over 50 workshops were held to discuss topics as diverse as 'Naming Ourselves As Writers' and 'Political and Polemical Writing'. Clearly the Lesbian and Gay Writers Conference has a long way to go before it can be as impressive and far-ranging as the FWC. However, the prospect of a struggle to reach such heights is infinitely preferable to seeing the project strangled in its infancy.

Will a third Conference be held in 1984? The woolliness of the plenary session, where this was discussed, leaves a strong feeling of uncertainty as to whether anyone will take on the organisational work. If they do not it will be a grave loss to the gay movement. Gay writing is on the increase and the writers - be they novelists, playwrights, poets or political theorists - need to come together so that they can exchange and develop ideas, break down their own isolation and reach an ever wider audience.

- A full report on the Feminist Writers Conference can be found in the radical feminist magazine 'Trouble and Strife' (No.1, Winter 1983).



## BOOK REVIEW

'All feminists are the same', at least, that is how the stereotypical image of feminism is portrayed. However, I found that a recent publication "Sex & Love, new thoughts on old contradictions", edited by Sue Cartledge and Joanna Ryan, quite successfully challenges this image. The book is a collection of essays written by feminists which shows that their experiences, sexual relationships and lifestyles are as complicated, vulnerable and diverse as those of any other woman regardless of her politics.

As my own research includes bisexuality I found the essay by Deborah Gregory 'From Where I Stand: A Case for Feminist Bisexuality' particularly interesting. This essay not only details the author's thoughts and lifestyle but also tells of the various experiences and feelings of many other feminists who identify themselves as bisexual.

What comes across in this chapter is confusion most of these women face. To be labelled lesbian in a heterosexist society is surely difficult enough albeit acceptable within feminist circles. However, to be bisexual is often considered to be decidedly 'odd' and a case of 'sitting on the fence'.

But Deborah Gregory, I feel, offers a good case for why bisexuality should be more acceptable in our changing society. It is suggested that their first loyalty is to women - woman centred bisexuality - with their relationships with men being what are referred to as the 'heterosexual component' which is part of the bisexual whole. Within this heterosexual component it is not necessarily the maleness itself that is attractive but an attraction to a person with particular qualities, which some women sometimes find in men as well as their sisters. Nor,

says the author from her own personal experience, does a relationship with a man necessarily mean a loss of autonomy nor necessarily demands a commitment to monogamy.

Based on the premise that no particular sexuality is 'natural' but socially constructed, Deborah says that whether women are bisexual, lesbian or heterosexual they can still politically challenge male supremacy and heterosexism. They can do this, she suggests, by taking control of their sexuality and relationships. At the same time communication is necessary to give meaning and substance to their changing lifestyles in order to dispel, for example, the notion that bisexuality only means what some advertisements seem to suggest - 'Attractive couple seek Bi-girl for fun and frolic'.

This essay certainly does help to fill a yawning gap in the literature on bisexuality. It may enlighten some sceptics and be a comfort to others who perhaps feel that they are in a wilderness and unable to come to terms with their own feelings and experiences. One's politics may change but does this necessarily mean that you have to change your sex life?

Sex & Love: new thoughts on old contradictions is published by The Women's Press. Price £4.95

Review by Maggie French -  
Department of Sociology,  
University of Essex

# Artistic Licence

Illustration Writing and Public Relations

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February 1983

(note: very friendly answering machine)

## BI, BI, BLUES!

I'm a professional writer looking for people willing to talk about bisexuality. My aim is to produce a book compiled of interviews, covering areas like how people came to realise they were bisexual, how they adjusted, how others react, etc.

The interviews will be guided discussions, not rigid question-and-answer sessions, and confidentiality will be guaranteed.

I'm not interested in exhibitionists or sensationalism, nor in interviewing homosexuals who once had a fling with the opposite sex, years ago — I think 'true' bisexuality is so little recognised and understood that it's time for a book which explores the subject seriously.

Can you help me, please? Thanks a lot.  
Ivana

(12)



# London Bisexual Group

## Programme of events

### FEBRUARY

- Sun 5 Tea Dance at Stallions
- Tues 7 Transvestism and Transexualism, by Stephanie  
Non-competitive Games
- Sun 12 Planning Meeting
- Tues 14 Valentine's Party
- Sun 19 Theatre Visit
- Tues 21 The Politics of Fashion by Rachel  
Discussion about theatre trip  
Arthur's Massage Workshop
- Tues 28 Speaker from the Gay Medical Association  
Paul's Astrology Workshop

### MARCH

- Sun 4 Tea Dance at Stallions
- Tues 6 Speaker from Gay Switchboard  
Arthur's Massage Workshop
- Tues 13 Travellers' Tales  
Discussion on our first Newsletter
- Sun 18 Bisexual Soapbox, Speaker's Corner, Hyde Park
- Tues 20 Discussion on Sex Role Stereotypes led by Rachel  
Drama Games workshop led by Stefan
- Tues 27 Playreading led by Richard  
Discussion on Masturbation and Guilt

## Neutrons -

Heard about the NEUTRON SOCIETY  
This is a group of people who are  
breaking down the sex role stereo-  
types. The word neutron comes from  
living as neither male or female.  
Interested? Then contact Rachel at  
the London Bigroup.

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